

Chatham Beach Preparedness 2019

Park & Recreation Department

Safety is always of high importance to anyone swimming in the waters around Chatham. Being aware of your surroundings is necessary for everyone using the beaches. The presence of white sharks feeding on seals in waters around Cape Cod has continued to grow as the expanding population of seals is attracting a greater number of white sharks to the area to feed.

Responding to the fatal shark attack in 2018 on Cape Cod, Chatham is committing additional resources to educate beach users of ways to be safe when using beaches in Town. There are ongoing efforts with other Cape Cod Communities, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Cape Cod National Seashore, and Atlantic White Shark Conservancy to provide a greater level of information to the public and additional research into how beaches can be made safer for all.

Chatham is implementing the following actions for the coming beach season with an emphasis on safety for those using designated swimming areas during the summer season.

All Lifeguard, Beach Patrol and Harbor Patrol staff are trained in First Aid, CPR and “Stop the Bleed”. Stop the Bleed is an essential technique in the event of a shark bite. Training in this blood loss control technique is now offered regularly across Cape Cod and regular beach users are encouraged to participate in a class that will teach them how to respond appropriately to a shark bite.

Beach Season

Lifeguards are scheduled to be on the five guarded beaches in Chatham beginning June 21st through September 1st. There may be limited guarded beaches after August 15th as many seasonal staff return to school. Guarded beach hours have been expanded to cover from 9:00am to 5:00pm daily.

Beach Patrol staff works the area of Lighthouse Beach with patrols starting June 21st and continue daily through Labor Day. They will also be on duty for the two weekends following Labor Day. Beach Patrol are at the beach each day, except in inclement weather, from 9:30am to 5:30pm.

Beach Safety Equipment

Every staffed beach has first aid supplies needed by a first responder to treat the types of medical situations that might be encountered on the beaches. The Chatham Fire Rescue Department also has response times of just a few minutes to any of Chatham’s staffed public beaches.

At Lighthouse Beach, staff uses two All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV’s) to carry necessary rescue equipment and patrol the beach. One of these vehicles will be replaced for the 2019 season

with the funding coming from the State. In addition, a Personal Watercraft (PWC) is used to assist with patrols and to facilitate rescue of a swimmer in strong currents.

Consistent Messaging to the Public and Education on the Presence of Sharks

The Shark Working Group, established in 2012, has been working on education and messaging since their inception. It's a regional effort to inform the public communicated in myriad ways, in person and on-line, on topics including:

- How to reduce the risk of an interaction with a shark;
- What to do should you witness a shark in the water;
- Education on how to 'Stop the Bleed' should you see a shark attack victim; and
- Education on how to use a shark bite kit.

Uniform Beach Signage and Brochures

Chatham, in partnership with Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham, Orleans, and Cape Cod National Seashore have invested in a uniform beach signage program to alert the public to the potential risks. These signs will be located at public beaches and major Town boat landing. Brochures are available at public buildings, Chamber of Commerce, hotels and motels, and other locations throughout town.

Acknowledgement:

Chatham, and Orleans, Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro and Provincetown, acknowledge the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Baker-Polito Administration, with support from State Senator Julian Cyr and State Representative Peake, for providing a \$383,000 grant to assist the six Outer Cape Communities with the implementation of many of the items described above.

The six communities also acknowledge the Cape Cod Commission which provided a \$15,000 grant to help fund the research described below.

- **Research possible deterrent and detection devices**

Chatham joined the Cape Cod National Seashore, Provincetown, Truro, Eastham, and Orleans, along with the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, to fund a study by Woods Hole Group of the effectiveness of possible shark deterrent systems and/or shark detection devices.

The effectiveness of each system will vary depending on several factors including location (open ocean vs estuary vs bay), ocean floor topography, wave climate, water temperature, shoreline configuration, etc.

Sharks and seals are in their natural habitat. We as humans must modify our behavior when venturing into their habitat and acknowledge the risk. We hope this study will help the communities find a possible deterrent or detection device that will make swimmers safer while acknowledging that nothing we do will ultimately make anyone 100% safe.